ROMANS 11

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS[4]	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Remnant of Israel	Israel's Rejection Not Total	Israel's Rejection Not Final	God's Mercy on Israel	The Remnant of Israel
11:1-10 (8-10)	11:1-10 (8b)	11:1-10 (8-10)	11:1-6	11:1-6
	(9b-10)		11:7-10 (9b-10)	11:7-10
The Salvation of Gentiles	Israel's Rejection Not Final			The Jews to be Restored in the Future
11:11-12	11:11-36	11:11-12	11:11-12	11:11-12
			The Salvation of the Gentiles	
11:13-16		11:13-16	11:13-15	11:13-15
				The Jews Are Still the Chosen People
		The Metaphor of the Olive Tree	11:16-18	11:16-24
11:17-24		11:17-24		
			11:19-24	
The Restoration of Israel		All Israel Will Be Saved	God's Mercy on All	The Conversion of the Jews
11:25-32 (26b-27)	(26b-27)	11:25-32 (26b-27)	11:25-32 (26b-27)	11:25-29 (26b-27)
				11:30-32
			Praise to God	A Hymn to God's Mercy and Wisdom

11:33-36 (34-35)	(34-35)	11:33-36 (34-35)	11:33-36 (34-35)	11:33-36

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO ROMANS 11

A. Romans 11 continues the paradoxical relationship between election (i.e., sovereignty: unconditional covenant) and gospel (i.e., human free will; conditional covenants). OT election was for service, while NT election is for salvation (check your concordance). In a sense believers are called to be both God's family (NT) and God's servants (OT). Election is both corporate and individual, positive and negative (Jacob/Israel; Esau/Edom; Moses/Pharaoh). Ultimately the tension is not only between God's sovereignty and human's free will, but in the very character of God. Romans 9-11 emphasizes again and again the mercy of God (check your concordance) and the rebellion of fallen mankind. God is faithful, humans are faithless.

Election is not a doctrine to exclude some, but to include all through faith. It is a foundation of hope, security and confidence for those who have responded to

1. the promises
2. the Son of the covenant-making God

B. In Romans 9 Paul asserted the sovereignty and freedom of God. Even in a covenant relationship, God is free. In Romans 10, Paul asserted that the Israelites of the OT and the Jews of Jesus' day were free to accept or reject God's promises and covenants. Since they proved to be unfaithful and rejected God's promises and covenant, they were, in one sense, rejected by God (i.e., the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles). However, in Romans 11, Paul will affirm God's faithfulness to choose all, even in the face of Israel's unfaithfulness (cf. Deuteronomy 8). Some exclusion will result in inclusion!!

C. In the past, as in the present, a Jewish remnant (corporate election, cf. Rom. 9:6) believed and exercised faith in God's Messiah. Paul himself was an example of this. The rejection of some unbelieving Jews allowed the inclusion of the believing Gentiles. The inclusion of the Gentiles will result in

1. the complete people of God
2. the full number of God's elect, both Jew and Gentile
3. this Gentile inclusion will motivate Israel to trust in God's Messiah, Jesus
   Again, exclusion of some for the possible inclusion of all through God's mercy and individual faith in God's Son.

D. As in Romans 9 and 10, Paul uses several OT quotes in Romans 11.

1. Rom. 11:3 – 1 Kgs. 19:14
2. Rom. 11:4 – 1 Kgs. 19:18
3. Rom. 11:8 – Isa. 29:10 and Deut. 29:4
4. Rom. 11:9 – Ps. 69:22

5. Rom. 11:10 – Ps. 69:23
6. Rom. 11:26 – Isa. 59:20-21
7. Rom. 11:27 – Isa. 27:9
8. Rom. 11:34 – Isa. 40:13-14
9. Rom. 11:35 – Job 35:7; 41:11

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 11:1-6

[1]I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. [2]God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in *the passage about* Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? [3]"Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE." [4]But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL." [5]In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's* gracious choice. [6]But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

11:1 "God has not rejected His people, has He" This question grammatically expects a "no" answer. Paul answers this question in Rom. 11:1b-10. This section must relate to Paul's previous argument. Romans 9-11 form a literary unit, a sustained argument.

The word translated "reject" (AORIST MIDDLE [deponent] INDICATIVE) basically means "to refuse" or "to cast off." It is used in

1. Acts 7:39 – Israel in the wilderness rejecting Moses' leadership
2. Acts 13:46 – the Jews of the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch rejecting Paul's preaching of the gospel
3. 1 Tim. 1:19 – some members of the church at Ephesus rejecting and making shipwrecks of their faith (i.e., Hymenaeus and Alexander)

YHWH did not cast off Israel! Israel cast off YHWH by her

1. continued disobedience
2. idolatry
3. now self-righteous legalism.

It is interesting to note that the early Greek papyrus manuscript P^{46} and the uncials F and G have "inheritance" instead of "people," which may be from the LXX of Ps. 94:14. The UBS^4 gives "people" an "A" rating (certain).

SPECIAL TOPIC: TEXTUAL CRITICISM

▣ **"May it never be"** This is Paul's characteristic way (AORIST MIDDLE OPTATIVE) of rejecting the supposed comments of the hypothetical objector (diatribe, cf. Rom. 3:4,6,31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13; 9:14; 11:1,11).

▣ **"I too am an Israelite"** Paul uses himself to prove the existence of a believing Jewish remnant. For further amplification of Paul's Jewish background see Phil. 3:5.

▣ **11:2 "God has not rejected His people"** This may be an allusion to Ps. 94:14 (cf. Deut. 31:6; 1 Sam. 12:22; 1 Kgs. 6:13; Lam. 3:31-32). It is a specific answer to the hypothetical question of Rom. 11:1.

▣ **"whom He foreknew"** This is an obvious reference to God's election of Israel. See note at Rom. 8:29. It takes the argument back to Romans 9, as do Rom. 11:4-6. The key was not Israel's performance, but God's choice. God is faithful to His promises because of who He is, not because of Israel's performance (cf. Ezek. 36:22-32). God's choice was to redeem fallen mankind. Israel, like Abraham, was a means to that end!

SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREKNOWLEDGE

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

▣ **"the Scripture says"** This is a reference to the account of Elijah's flight from Jezebel in 1 Kings 19:10, quoted in Rom. 11:3.

11:4 "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND" "For Myself" is not in the Masoretic Hebrew text of 1 Kgs. 19:18 (Paul does not quote the MT or the LXX), but is added by Paul to emphasize God's choice (see full note on Paul's additions and changes to OT texts at Rom. 9:33). The faithful remnant of 1 Kgs. 19:18 is viewed from God's choice, not their rejection of *Ba'al* worship.

The point Paul is making is that there was a small group of faithful followers even in faithless, idolatrous Israel of Elijah's day. In Paul's day there was also a believing remnant of Jewish people. In every age some Jews have responded by faith. Paul asserts that these believing Jews are energized by the mercy and grace of God (Rom. 11:5-6).

SPECIAL TOPIC: REMNANT, THREE SENSES

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL'S GOD (OT)

▣ **"to Baal"** This is a FEMININE ARTICLE with a MASCULINE NOUN. This was because the Jews regularly inserted vowels from the FEMININE Hebrew word "shame" (*bosheth*) into the consonants of the names of pagan deities to make fun of them.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FERTILITY WORSHIP OF THE ANE

11:5-6 These are key verses.

1. They link the past actions of God in the OT to the current situation.
2. The link is the election of God by mercy (cf. Rom. 9:15,16,18; 11:30,31,32).
3. God's Grace is priority, but human faith is necessary (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21), however, not based at all on human merit (cf. Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5).

These truths are crucial in Paul's argumentation throughout Romans 9-11.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FAITH, BELIEVE, OR TRUST

11:6 "if" This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Salvation is by God's grace (see note at Rom. 3:24, cf. Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9).

▣ The KJV adds a concluding phrase to Rom. 11:6, "But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no longer work." This phrase is not included in most ancient Greek manuscripts P^{46}, ℵ*, A, C, D, G, or P, and the Old Latin versions, but two different forms of the phrase appear in manuscripts ℵ^{c} and B. The UBS^{4} rates their omission as "A" (certain).

SPECIAL TOPIC: TEXTUAL CRITICISM

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 11:7-10

[7]What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen

obtained it, and the rest were hardened; [8]just as it is written,

"God gave them a spirit of stupor,

Eyes to see not and ears to hear not,

Down to this very day."

[9]And David says,

"Let their table become a snare and a trap,

And a stumbling block and a retribution to them.

[10]Let their eyes be darkened to see not,

And bend their backs forever."

11:7 "What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained" This is placed first in the Greek sentence to emphasize Paul's thought. Many Jews were seeking to be right with God and they pursued this in the performance of religious ritual, racial privilege, and self-effort. They missed their goal! No flesh will glory before God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:29; Eph. 2:9).

▣

NASB	**"but those who were chosen obtained it"**
NKJV, Peshitta	**"but the elect have obtained it"**
NRSV	**"The elect obtained it"**
TEV	**"It was only the small group that God chose who found it"**
NJB, REB	**"but only the chosen few"**

This is the OT concept of "remnant," here referring to the 7,000 of 1 Kgs. 19:18. The key is not human effort, race, or religiosity (Rom. 11:6), but the grace of God in election (cf. Eph. 1:3-4).

▣ **"the rest were hardened"** This is an AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE (cf. 2 Cor. 3:14). The implication is that God hardened them (cf. Rom. 11:8-10). The agent of hardening is the evil one (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4). "Hardened" (*pōroō*) is a medical term for callousness or blindness (cf. Rom. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:14; Eph. 4:18). This same term is used of the Apostles in Mark 6:52. It is a different Greek term from Rom. 9:18 (*sklērunō*) which is the opposite of mercy (cf. Heb. 3:8,15; 4:7).

This verse is very clear and is a summary of Rom. 11:1-6. Some who were chosen believed, some who were not chosen were hardened. However, this verse was not written in isolation, as a theological slogan. It was part of a sustained theological argument (i.e., chapters 9-11). There is a tension between the truth stated so clearly in this verse and the universal invitations of Romans 10. There is mystery here. But the solution is not to negate or minimize either of the horns of the dilemma, the paradoxical poles.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD HARDENED

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE BIBLE AS EASTERN LITERATURE

11:8-10 These verses are quotes taken from Isa. 29:10 (Rom. 11:8a), Deut. 29:4 (Rom. 11:8b, but not from the MT or the LXX; see full note on Paul's use of translations in Rom. 9:33) and Ps. 69:22-23 (Rom. 11:9-10). They truly reflect the call and mission of Isaiah to a rebellious Israel in Isa. 6:9-13. Isaiah would present God's word, but God's people could not, would not respond. Paul is giving OT attestation to God's hardening of some as he did in Rom. 9:13,15,17.

11:8	
NASB, NKJV	**"God gave them a spirit of stupor"**
NRSV, NJB	**"God gave them a sluggish spirit"**

TEV	**"God made their minds and hearts dull"**
REB	**"God has dulled their senses"**
Peshitta	**"God has given them a stubborn spirit"**

This Greek word (*katanuxis*), is used only here in the NT. It is another medical term used by Luke the physician. It is used of an insect bite that dulls the senses by inducing too much sensation.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT IN THE NT

11:10 "LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER" This is an AORIST PASSIVE IMPERATIVE followed by an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE from Ps. 69:23; see notes online. This is similar to Isa. 6:9-10. This is the mystery of God's sovereignty and mankind's necessary response. God is the source of all things, the initiator of all things, yet in His sovereign will He has decreed that humans, His ultimate creation, freely respond to Him. Those who do not respond in faith are hardened (i.e., their choice, finalized) in their unbelief.

In this context Paul asserts God's eternal plan for redeeming all of Adam's children. Jewish unbelief will open the door of faith to the Gentiles and through jealousy restore national Israel! It is a plan of inclusion (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13), not exclusion! Hardening serves a greater harvest (i.e., Pharaoh)!

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD HARDENED

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 11:11-16

[11]I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. [12]Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! [13]But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, [14]if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. [15]For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will *their* acceptance be but life from the dead? [16]If the first piece *of dough* is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too.

11:11 "I say then" This is the same rhetorical phrase as Rom. 11:1. It continues Paul's theological argument in a different way.

1. In Rom. 11:1-10 not all Israel is rejected by God.
2. In Rom. 11:11-24 Israel's rejection is not permanent; it is purposeful.
3. Through it the believing Gentiles have been included.

▣

NASB	**"they did not stumble so as to fall, did they"**
NKJV, NRSV, Peshitta	**"have they stumbled that they should fall"**
TEV	**"When the Jews stumbled, did they fall to their ruin"**
NJB	**"Have the Jews fallen forever, or have they just stumbled"**
REB	**"when they stumbled, was their fall final"**

This question grammatically expected a "no" answer. Israel's unbelief is not a permanent situation.

▣

NASB	**"by their transgression"**
NKJV	**"through their fall"**
NRSV	**"through their stumbling"**
TEV	**"Because they sinned"**
NJB	**"their fall"**
REB	**"through a false step on their part"**
Peshitta	**"by their stumbling"**

In context, this refers to the contemporary Jewish rejection of Jesus as the Messiah (cf. Rom. 11:12).

▣ **"salvation *has come* to the Gentiles"** What a shocking statement this was to first century Jews, but it fits many OT (see Special Topic below) and NT texts (cf. Rom. 11:12; Acts 13:46; 18:6; 22:21; 28:28).

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN

▣ **"to make them jealous"** The term "jealous" occurs in Rom. 10:19 and Rom. 11:14. God's plan of including the Gentiles serves two purposes.

1. God's redemption of all mankind
2. God's restoration of a repentant remnant of Israel to personal faith

I personally wonder if #2 involves

1. an end-time Jewish revival (cf. Zech. 12:10)
2. Jewish believers of the first century and every century
3. modern Messianic synagogues could be the promised fulfillment?

11:12-14 In these verses there is a series of ten CONDITIONAL SENTENCES which relate to Jewish unbelief in relation to Gentile belief. Verses 12,14,15,16,17,18,21,24 are FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES which are assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purpose, while Rom. 11:22 and 23 are THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES which indicate potential future action.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK GRAMMATICAL TERMS, VII

11:12	
NASB	**"how much more will their fulfillment be"**
NKJV	**"how much more their fullness"**
NRSV	**"How much more will their full inclusion mean"**
TEV	**"Then, how much greater the blessings will be, when the complete number of Jews is included"**
NJB	**"then think how much more it will benefit from the conversion of them all"**
REB	**"how much more will their coming to full strength mean"**
Peshitta	**"how much more is their restoration"**

The crux of interpretation is the meaning of the term "their fullness." Is it related to

1. Jews being saved, Rom. 11:14b, 26a
2. the final number of elect believing Jews and Gentiles?

11:13 "I am speaking to you who are Gentiles" Romans 9-11 forms a literary unit that answered the question, "Why has the Jewish Messiah been rejected by the Jews?" However, the question

remains why Paul felt the need in this letter, at this point in his presentation, to deal with this question.

Verses 13-24, 25c seem to reflect a problem in the church at Rome between racial Jews and Gentiles. Whether it was between

1. believing Jews and believing Gentiles in the church of Rome
2. believing Gentiles and unbelieving Jews (the synagogue) in Rome is uncertain

▣ **"I am an apostle of Gentiles"** Paul felt uniquely called to minister to the Gentile world (cf. Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17; Rom. 1:5; 15:16; Gal. 1:16; 2:7,9; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 4:17).

▣

NASB, NKJV	**"I magnify my ministry"**
NRSV	**"I glorify my ministry"**
TEV	**"I will take pride in my work"**
NJB	**"and I am proud of being sent"**
Peshitta	**"and perhaps magnify my ministry"**

The term "magnify" could mean

1. thankfulness
2. pride in
3. making the most of something

This may also reflect a problem in the church at Rome! Paul

1. is pleased to serve Gentiles
2. saw his ministry as making the unbelieving Jews jealous, which would result in their salvation (cf. Rom. 11:11,14 and 9:1-3)

11:14 "save some of them" This is Paul's evangelistic calling. He knew some would respond to gospel preaching (cf. 1 Cor. 1:21), while others would not (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23). This is the mystery of election (OT and NT)!

The mystery, why some respond in repentance and faith when they hear the gospel and others do not, has been explained in two ways.

1. some assert that the mystery relates to God's choice of only some, but not all
2. others assert that the mystery is the fallen nature of mankind (i.e., "the mystery of iniquity")

I think #1 damages the merciful character of Israel's God (i.e., Exod. 3:4-6). There are just too many biblical texts on God's invitation and will for all to be saved (see full list in SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN).

SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION VS. HUMAN FREE WILL

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL'S GOD (OT)

11:15 The rejection (different word than Rom. 11:1) of the OT chosen Israel was part of God's plan for the redemption of all humanity (*kosmos*). Jewish self-righteous, racial arrogance, and legalism clearly accentuated the need for faith (cf. Rom. 9:30-33). Faith in YHWH and His Messiah, not human religious performance, is the key to right standing (cf. Rom. 3:21-31). But remember, the rejection of Israel was for the purpose of redeeming the whole of humanity. There is no place for human pride, neither Jewish nor Gentile. This apparently is a message that the Roman church needed to hear!

▣ **"the reconciliation of the world"** This is theologically parallel to "the righteousness of God." The compound term comes from *kata* plus *alassō* (to change, alter, or transform). It refers to the exchange of hostility for peace, thereby, restoration of favor (cf. Rom. 5:11; 11:15; 2 Cor. 5:18,19). God seeks restoration of the fellowship of Eden. Sin broke that fellowship, but Christ has restored

the image of God in fallen humanity for all who exercise faith. They are reconciled and accepted (parallelism of Rom. 11:15). Mankind could not restore this intimacy, but God can and did!

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAULS' USE OF *KOSMOS*

▣ **"but life from the dead"** The context is addressing national Israel, so

1. does this phrase refer to a restored national Israel
2. does this phrase refer to the "full number" of Jews and Gentiles (i.e., spiritual Israel, cf. Rom. 9:6; 11:25-26)
3. does this phrase (cf. Rom. 6:13) refer to new age life, resurrection life?

I like #3. For my reasons see "Crucial Introductory Article," in my commentary on Revelation online free at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

11:16 "if the first piece *of dough* be holy" This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. It is an allusion to Num. 15:17-21. It is imagery which is similar to the OT concept of First Fruits (or the tithe) which were given to God to show that the whole harvest belonged to Him.

The ancient believing Jewish remnant still had an effect on the whole nation (cf. Gen. 18:27-33; 2 Chr. 7:14). The imagery of "first piece" is parallel to "the root" (cf. Jer. 11:16-17), both of which refer to the faithful ones of Israel, particularly the Patriarchs (i.e., "the root" of Rom. 11:16-17) of the OT (cf. Rom. 11:28).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 11:17-24

[17]But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, [18]do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, *remember that* it is not you who supports the root, but the root *supports* you. [19]You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." [20]Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; [21]for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. [22]Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. [23]And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. [24]For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural *branches* be grafted into their own olive tree?

11:17-24 Surprisingly "you" in this paragraph is SINGULAR (the PLURAL reappears in Rom. 11:25). What does this mean?

1. this paragraph focuses on individual election, while chapter 9 focuses on corporate election
2. one Gentile as a symbol of all Gentiles
3. the problem in the Roman church between believing Jewish and Gentile leadership, thereby, referring to the current Gentile leadership (cf. Rom. 11:18-20)

11:17 "if" See note at Rom. 11:12-24.

▣ **"the branches were broken off"** This imagery refers to the unbelieving Jews of Jesus' day (cf. Rom. 11:18,19, "natural branches," Rom. 11:21).

▣ **"the wild olive"** This imagery refers to believing Gentiles who respond to gospel preaching.

▣ **"grafted"** Paul continues the agricultural imagery begun in Rom. 11:16. The grafting of wild olive branches into an established tree helped improve yields (cf. Rom. 11:24).

▣ **"of the rich root"** The literal original phrase, "the root of the fatness" (UBS^4 gives it a "B" rating [almost certain]), is found in MSS ℵ*, B, C. There are several other readings in the Greek manuscript traditions that try to smooth out this asyndeton (Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 526).

▣ **"the olive tree"** This is imagery for national Israel (cf. Rom. 11:24; Ps. 52:8; 128:3; Jer. 11:16; Hos. 14:6). This is Paul's second OT image to describe the relationship between Jews and Gentiles.

11:18 "do not be arrogant toward the branches" This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE with NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means stop an act already in process. This verse, plus Rom. 11:13, 20, 25, implies that there was a problem in the church of Rome between believing Jews and Gentiles.

11:19-20 Verse 19 is another diatribe (a supposed objector). Paul explains why the Jews were rejected. It was because of their unbelief, not because the Gentiles were loved more! The Gentiles were only included because of God's mercy (cf. Gen. 3:15) and their faith! Because their inclusion simply by faith would cause the Jews to return to God because of jealousy (cf. Rom. 11:11,14).

11:20

NASB	**"but you stand by your faith"**
NKJV	**"and you stand by faith"**
NRSV	**"but you stand only through faith"**
TEV	**"while you remain in place because you do believe"**
NJB	**"if you still hold firm, it is only thanks to your faith"**
REB	**"and by faith you hold your place"**
Peshitta	**"but you exist by faith"**

This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. However, it is in the context of ten CONDITIONAL SENTENCES. Our standing before God is and continues to be by faith. If faith ceases, our standing ceases (see SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY. Salvation is

1. an initial faith response
2. a state of being in faith
3. an ongoing process of faith
4. a final culmination of faith

Be careful of any theological system that only focuses on one of these biblical truths.
SPECIAL TOPIC: FAITH, BELIEVE, OR TRUST
SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK VERB TENSES USED FOR SALVATION

God is the author, initiator, sustainer, and culminator of salvation, but in a covenant pattern. He has chosen that sinful mankind must respond and continue to respond by repentance and faith at every step of the process. He expects obedience, Christlikeness, and perseverance!

This paragraph, Rom. 11:17-24, clearly shows that unconditional salvation/election must be qualified. The Church must remain in faith to the end.

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY

▣

NASB	**"Do not be conceited, but fear"**

NKJV	**"Do not be haughty, but fear"**
NRSV	**"So do not become proud, but stand in awe"**
TEV	**"But do not be proud of it; instead, be afraid"**
NJB	**"Rather than making you proud, that should make you afraid"**
REB	**"Put away your pride and be on guard"**
Peshitta	**"Do not be high minded, but reverence God"**

Both of these statements are PRESENT IMPERATIVES. The first has the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means stop an act already in process. It revealed a fellowship problem in the Roman church. The reason for the fear is stated in Rom. 11:21.

11:21 "neither will He spare you" As Israel apostatized and went away from YHWH in prideful unbelief and was cut off, so will the church be cut off if she leaves faith in Christ through prideful self-righteousness. Initial faith must be followed by lifestyle faith (i.e., justification must not be separated from sanctification, cf. Matt. 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-12; Luke 8:4-10). Pride must be continually resisted. We are what we are by the grace of God and we are brothers with all who also trust Christ!

SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY *(APHISTĒMI)*

11:22 "the kindness and severity of God" God's ways always seem paradoxical to fallen humanity (cf. Isa. 55:8-11). There are consequences to our choices. God's election does not negate mankind's responsibility. The election of national Israel did not guarantee each individual's salvation.

SPECIAL TOPIC: EASTERN LITERATURE (biblical paradoxes)

▣ **"if you continue in His kindness"** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE with a PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE. This construction meant that believing Gentile continuance is conditional (this is the flip side of God's sovereignty of Romans 9); we must be diligent to maintain our faith (cf. Phil. 2:12-13). This refers to the perseverance of both the group and the individual (cf. Gal. 6:9; Rev. 2:7,17; 3:6,13,22). This is the mystery and tension of corporality and individuality in the Bible. There are both promises (based on God's character) and conditional covenants (based on human response).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NEED TO PERSEVERE

11:23 This verse follows the grammatical and theological pattern of Rom. 11:22. If the Jews repent and believe they will be included (v. 24). If the Gentiles cease to believe, they will be rejected (cf. Rom. 11:20). Initial faith in Christ and continual faith in Him are crucial for both. Salvation is a relationship not a ticket to heaven!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 11:25-32

25For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery- so that you will not be wise in your own estimation-that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; 26and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,

"THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,
HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB."
27"THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,
WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."

28From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint

of *God's* choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; [29]for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. [30]For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, [31]so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. [32]For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.

11:25 "I do not want you brethren, to be uninformed" This is a characteristic idiom of Paul's (cf. Rom. 1:13; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:13). It usually introduces a significant theological discussion. It functions like Jesus' initial "Amen, Amen." Paul often uses it to signal a new topic.

▣

NASB, NKJV, NRSV, Peshitta	**"mystery"**
TEV	**"a secret truth"**
NJB	**"a hidden reason for all of this"**
REB	**"a divine secret"**

This term has a wide semantical field. Each context must be examined closely.

SPECIAL TOPIC: MYSTERY IN THE GOSPELS

▣ **"lest you be wise in your own estimation"** Here is another hint of the tension in the Roman church (or house churches, cf. Rom. 11:18). See INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE.

▣

NASB	**"that a partial hardening has happened to Israel"**
NKJV	**"that a hardening in part has happened to Israel"**
NRSV	**"a hardening has come upon part of Israel"**
TEV	**"that the stubbornness of the people of Israel is not permanent"**
NJB	**"One section of Israel has become blind"**
Peshitta	**"For blindness of heart has to some degree befallen Israel"**

This statement must be related to all of Romans 11. There have been and will continue to be some believing Jews. This partial blindness, instigated by God (Rom. 11:8-10) because of the Jews' rejection of Jesus, fits into God's plan to redeem all mankind.

1. God promised salvation to all (cf. Gen. 3:15).
2. He chose Abraham to reach all (cf. Gen. 12:3).
3. He chose Israel to reach all (cf. Exod. 19:5-6).

Israel failed in her mission effort through pride, unfaithfulness and unbelief. God wanted to reach the Gentile world through His blessing of Israel (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29). Israel could not keep the Covenant, therefore, God's temporal judgment fell on her. Now God has taken this very judgment and used it to fulfill His original purpose of the redemption of mankind through faith (cf. Rom. 11:30-31; Ezek. 36:22-38).

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD HARDENED

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN

SPECIAL TOPIC: ONE CAUSALITY

▣ **"until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in"** This same term (*pleroma*) is used in Rom. 11:12 for the Jews. Both verses speak of God's foreknowledge and election. The "until" speaks of a time limit to this Gentile period (cf. Luke 21:24).

11:26 "all Israel will be saved" There are two possible interpretations.

1. This refers to national Israel-not every single individual Jew (cf. Rom. 9:6) but many at a certain point in history.
2. This refers in some sense to spiritual Israel, the Church. Paul used this broader concept in Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 3:28-29; 6:16; Eph. 2:11-3:13; Col. 3:11; 1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6. This is my understanding.

"The full quota of the Jews" in Rom. 11:12 and "the full quota of the Gentiles" in Rom. 11:25 are in a parallel relationship. It is "all" in the sense of God's election not all in the sense of every individual. The olive tree of promise will one day be complete.

Some commentators say that this must refer to national Israel only because of

1. the context of Romans 9-11
2. the same phrase is used in Rom. 9:6 for national Israel
3. the OT quotes in Rom. 11:26-27
4. the clear statement in Rom. 11:28

God still has a love and desire for Abraham's natural seed to be saved! However, they must come through faith in Christ (Zech. 12:10) or they cannot be saved.

The question of whether those Jews who were "hardened" will have an end time chance to respond cannot be answered from this or any text. As Americans we are culturally conditioned to ask individual questions but the Bible focuses on the corporate whole. All questions like this must be left to God. He will be just to His creation which He loves!

▣ **"as it is written"** This refers to two quotes from the Septuagint of Isa. 59:20-21 (Rom. 11:26) and Isa. 27:9 (Rom. 11:27). The mechanism of salvation will be faith in Jesus the Messiah. There is no plan B, just plan A. There is only one way to be saved (cf. John 10:7-18; 11:25-29;14:6).

11:27 Isaiah 27:9, which is quoted in Rom. 11:27, combines the restoration of Israel to the Promised Land (Rom. 11:1-11) with the invitation to the traditional enemy (Gentile nations) to be included (cf. Rom. 11:12-13).

1. If this restoration is literal then the millennium may fulfill this prophecy.
2. If it is figurative, then the new covenant, the mystery of the gospel, in which Jew and Gentile are joined by faith in God's Messiah will be the goal (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 3:22; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:11-3:13; Col. 3:11).
3. It is difficult to decide. Some OT prophecies are applied to the New Covenant church. Yet God is faithful to His promises, even when humans are not (cf. Ezek. 36:22-36).

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY DO OT COVENANT PROMISES SEEM SO DIFFERENT FROM NT COVENANT PROMISES

11:28 This verse reflects the twin aspects of election.

1. in the OT election was for service; God chose human instrumentality for the purpose of redeeming humanity
2. in the NT election is linked to the gospel and eternal salvation; this salvation of all humans made in God's image has always been the goal (cf. Gen. 3:15)

God is faithful to His promises. This is true for the OT believers and NT saints. The key is God's faithfulness (not mankind's), God's mercy (not mankind's performance). Election is for the purpose of blessing all, not of excluding some!

SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN

▣ **"they are beloved for the sake of the fathers"** This statement is linked to the promise of Exod. 20:5-6 and Deut. 5:9-10 and 7:9. Families are blessed because of the faith of previous generations. Israel was blessed because of faithful Patriarchs (cf. Deut. 4:37; 7:8; 10:15). That the Messiah would come from Judah was also a promise to David (cf. 2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17). However, it must also be stated that even the "faithful" were unable to fully keep the Law (cf. Ezek. 36:22-36). Faith—personal faith, family faith, but not perfect faith—is acceptable to God and is potentially passed on through families (cf. 1 Cor. 7:8-16).

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT PROMISES TO THE PATRIARCHS

11:29	
NASB, NKJV, NRSV	**"for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable"**
TEV	**"For God does not change his mand about whom he chooses and blesses"**
NJB	**"God never takes back his gifts or revokes his choice"**
REB	**"For the gracious gifts of God and his calling are irrevocable"**
Peshitta	**"For God does not withdraw his gifts and his call"**

This does not refer to spiritual gifts to individuals (cf. 1 Corinthians 12), but to God's promises of salvation, OT and NT. Election is effective. The faithfulness of God is the hope of national Israel (cf. Mal. 3:6) and spiritual Israel!

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL'S GOD (OT)

11:30-32 These verses are a summary of God's plans and purposes.

1. They are always based on His mercy (see note at Rom. 9:15-16), not arbitrary determinism. The term "mercy" is used four times in this larger context (cf. Rom. 9:15,16,18,23).
2. God has judged all humans. Jews and Gentiles are all sinful and need forgiveness (cf. Rom. 3:9,19,23; 5:11).
3. God has used mankind's need and inability as an opportunity to show mercy to all humanity (cf. Rom. 11:22). Again in context "all" must be seen in light of Rom. 11:12 and 25-26. Not all individuals will respond to God's offer, but all are included in the scope of redemption (cf. Rom. 5:12-21; John 3:16). Oh, God, may it be so!!!

11:30 and 31 "but now" This strongly implies the spiritual conversion of national Israel by faith in Jesus (cf. Zech. 12:10). As the Gentiles' "unbelief" has been overcome by the mercy of God, so will Jewish "unbelief." When and how this will happen is not stated.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 11:33-36

33Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

34For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?

35Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?

36For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.

11:33-36 This is one of Paul's marvelous extemporaneous doxologies. Paul is overwhelmed by the ways of God: covenant faithfulness, covenant inclusion, covenant consummation.

11:33 "the riches" This is a favorite idiom for Paul (cf. Rom. 2:4; 9:23; 10:12; 11:12,33; Eph. 1:7,8; 2:7; 3:8,16; Phil. 4:19; Col. 1:27). The thrust of the gospel and the hope of mankind is the merciful abundance of God's character and plan (cf. Isa. 55:1-7).

▣ **"How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways"** This is an appropriate doxology to the paradoxical truths of Romans 9-11 (cf. Isa. 55:8-11).

11:34 This is a quote from the Septuagint of Isa. 40:13-14, where God delivers His people by bringing them back from exile. In 1 Cor. 2:16 Paul quotes this same passage but attributes the title, "Lord," to Jesus.

11:35 This is a loose quote from Job 35:7 or 41:11.

11:36 "for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things" These phrases refer to God the Father in this context (cf. 1 Cor. 11:12), but are very similar to other NT passages which refer to God the Son (cf. 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 2:10). Paul affirms that all things issue from God and return to God (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24-28).

▣ **"to Him be the glory forever"** This is a characteristic NT blessing on Deity. It referred

1. sometimes to the Father (cf. Rom. 16:27; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; 1 Pet. 4:11; 5:11; Jude 25; Rev. 5:13; 7:12)
2. sometimes to the Son (cf. 1 Tim. 1:17; 2 Tim. 4:18; 2 Pet. 3:18; Rev. 1:16)

See full note at Rom. 3:23 and SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY (NT) and SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY (OT)

For "forever" see SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER (GREEK IDIOM)

▣ **"Amen"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How did Israel miss God's way of salvation?
2. What two reasons does Paul give to prove that God has not rejected Israel?
3. Why did God harden the Jews' hearts? How?
4. What is meant by the concept of a Jewish "remnant" (Rom. 11:2-5)?
5. Define the term "mystery" in the NT.
6. What does 11:26 mean? Why? How is it related to 9:6?
7. What warning does Paul give to the Gentile believers (Rom. 11:17-24)?

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